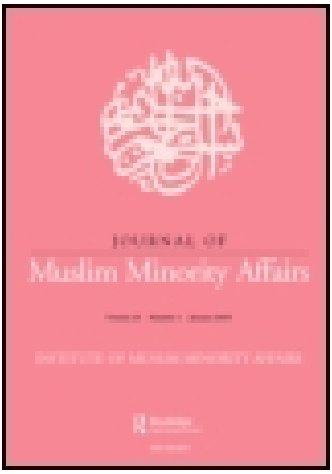
This article was downloaded by: [New York University]
On: 21 February 2015, At: 12:05
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjmm19

Non-Muslim minorities in an Islamic state

Fazlur Rahman [a]

[a] Professor of Islamic Thought , University of Chicago ,

Published online: 20 Mar 2007.

To cite this article: Fazlur Rahman (1986) Non-Muslim minorities in an Islamic state, Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. Journal, 7:1, 13-24, DOI: 10.1080/13602008608715961

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13602008608715961

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution,

reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

Non-Muslim Minorities in an Islamic State

Fazlur Rahman

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

Introduction

Thomas Michel (JIMMA, Vol. VI:1) in his excellent article on the rights of non-Muslims living in predominantly Muslim societies, has broached an area on which it is important for all Muslims – who are majorities in their societies and those who are minorities in their societies – to reflect deeply from different perspectives – majority Muslims, because this question directly concerns them and minority Muslims because they themselves are minorities in a non-Muslim majority country and therefore, their destiny or fate has a parallel in those non-Muslims who are minorities in Muslim societies. Thomas Michel's paper is very comprehensive: in the first part, it deals with certain general issues that he raises about the nature of the relationship of a majority community with its minorities, particularly Muslim majorities vis-a-vis their minorities. He rightly points out that a minority can go to only a certain point in its demands for freedom of activity vis-a-vis a majority, and that beyond that point, it is unreasonable on the part of a minority to interfere with the "internal" affairs of the majority. However, he also states rightly that there is a limit to which a majority can go in exercising its freedoms and privileges vis-a-vis its minorities.

Universal Norms

It seems to me that there are certain basic principles and values which no majority or minority can violate with impunity. These values, while a humanist may regard them as resting on secular humanistic grounds, nevertheless are ingrained clearly in the Divinely-ordained religions as Divine imperatives. For example, that no person may kill another person is an inherent right of all human beings and it is because of this that the Qur'ān says, that a person who kills another person without just cause is as though he has killed all humanity, while a person who saves another person is as though he has saved all humanity (5:32).

Dr. Michel has also pointed out that there are certain religious groups whose practices sometimes come into conflict with the sensibilities of other groups even though the former claim that it is their inherent right to indulge in those practices. Beyond this, however, there is also the question of difference in standards of conduct set out in different religions. In these situations, it becomes a problem as to whether a person from one religious group while facing one from another should use the standard of conduct of his own religious group or of the other. For example, when a Muslim and a Christian come together whether in peace or in conflict, should the Muslim expect the Christian to behave according to the ethical standards of his own religion and demand that he "turn the other cheek" or whether he should apply the standards of Islam and believe in mercy and forgiveness but also reserve the right to exercise the *lex talionis?*

Different norms of different religions can create extremely delicate situations. The case of the Christian and the Muslim that I have just cited is, perhaps, in practical terms, not of great importance but take the case of Hindu ethic which regards all non-Hindus as being *mlech,* i.e. unclean, and therefore to be avoided. It appears that in Hindu ethics the question of clean and unclean occupies perhaps the most basic position and the entire ethic of Hinduism seems to rest on this concept. How then can a person professing such an ethic and sincerely committed to it face and/or come to terms with Muslims and Christians, for example, is extremely difficult to decide. The Jewish claims to being the elected ones of God and that God relates himself to other peoples in a secondary or even derivative manner belongs also to this genre of diverging ethics given by different religions to their followers.

It is because of these considerations that it becomes absolutely necessary that the existence and sanctity of certain basic values be recognized universally by followers of all religions and equally by humanists and those who do not profess any positive religion, as I pointed out in the preceding paragraph. Before coming to the detailed points that Thomas Michel has raised for Muslims to consider, I think it would be proper for me to give an account of the attitude of the Qur'ān and the sunnah, as I see it, towards other religious groups. Having done this, I shall say a few words about the juristic developments in Islam and after making a few remarks about the historical performance of Muslims, I will pass on to a brief discussion of the seven points that Dr. Michel has proposed.

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

Islamic Attitude Toward Other Religions

So far as the Qur'ān is concerned, the most basic point to remember in the context of the present discussion is the fact that it never claimed to be something entirely new that had not come to mankind before. In fact, in contradistinction to what it perceives to be the claims of Jews and Christians in terms of proprietary claims on God and Truth, the Qur'ān asserted from the very beginning that Divine Guidance has been universal and that God has not been partial to any particular nation to the exclusion of others in guiding them. This is the patent doctrine of the Qur'ān. The grounds on which this view rests is the Unity of God and the unity of the source of guidance from which all guidance and revelation has come from time to time to mankind. Though, this guidance has shown a certain development and progress, basically all guidance brought by every prophet is the same, namely it rests on the concept of one God. From this, it appears that the Qur'ān seems to claim that the Unity of God also requires in some basic sense the unity of mankind. For the Qur'ān, therefore, all messages that have come to mankind are universal. It is not true that the messages of the prophets before Muhammad (peace of God be upon him!) were only local and that only the Qur'ānic message is universal. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān emphasizes upon Muslims the necessity of belief in all divine messages and divine messengers and not to exclude others in favor of some.

In pursuance of this belief, the Qur'ān, although it claims that its Truths, its own Truths, are more developed and perfect than the earlier-revealed mes-

sages, nevertheless acknowledges the truth of all earlier messages. Although it says that the earlier communities, namely Jews and Christians have been given the truths, but not the whole truths, it nevertheless regarded itself as "guardian" *[muhaimin]* over earlier revealed documents. But the Qur'ān does not stop here. In Sura XXII, while announcing for the first time, the permission for jihad (i.e., the permission granted to those Muslims who were forced to flee from their homes and lands in Mecca because they believed in one God, to fight for their rights and get back their homes and their lands that rightfully belonged to them) it says:

> But for the fact that God continues to repel some people by means of others, cloisters, and churches and synagogues and place of worship – mosques – would be razed to the ground (22:40).

From this verse it is clear that all those places that have been consecrated to the *remembrance of God,* where God's name is mentioned have to be defended against attacks. Thus, the Qur'ān subscribes both to the sanctity of all revealed books and to the sanctity of all places of worship where *God's name is mentioned.*

That life may not be taken without justification, that rather life so far as possible, must be saved also comes out from the traditions attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him!) There is a hadith in the *Sahih* of Muslim that once a prostitute was going somewhere when on the way she saw a dog dying of thirst. Since there was no water available there except a well, the prostitute made her scarf into a rope and her shoe into a bucket, fetched water from the well and saved the dog dying from thirst. For this act, God pardoned her sins. There is another hadith, according to which the Prophet (peace be upon him!) said that a woman was sent to hell because she kept a cat tied up, did not feed it nor did she allow it to go free and seek food and drink for itself. These and other traditions show that mercy is the most basic attribute of humanity. Indeed, according to the Qur'ān, God Himself, created this universe out of sheer mercy because it was not encumbent upon Him to create anything:

> He has written the law of Mercy upon Himself (6:12).

Juristical Development

So far as the juristic formulation of basic rights is concerned, there are five which are commonly found in the works of political theory and jurisprudence.

1. The right to life.
2. The right to religion.
3. The right to property.
4. The right to safeguarding of one's honor *(ird.)*
5. The right to reason *(aql.)*

This last right, the right to reason, is the inherent right of every human being according to Muslim jurists because the hallmark that distinguishes man from animals is reason. The concept of *'ird,* i.e. personal honor or human dignity is a pre-Islamic Arab concept of the most importance, which was confirmed by the Qur'ān. In fact, when closely considered, all the human rights enumerated above depend on the concept of *'ird,* for all violations of any of the other four fundamental human rights depend upon the concept of *'ird;* if one kills a person

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

or confiscates his property or interferes with his reason through torture or any other way, it is the *'ird* or dignity of the victim that is fundamentally violated. The Qur'ān, itself, says that if a person is killed without any justification then it is as though all humanity has been killed or if one life is saved, it is as though all humanity's life has been saved, as I mentioned before, some jurists leave one with the impression that these fundamental rights are primarily if not entirely those belonging to the Muslims. There is no doubt whatsover, however, that the juristic doctrine is concerned with the rights of all individuals, male and female, living in an Islamic state and it is the duty of the state or the *khalifa,* those responsible for maintaining and guarding these human rights.

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

Before we go further, it should be pointed out that the Qur'ān and the sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him!) have not been the only sources for the entire body of Islamic law. Besides the Qur'ān and the example of the Prophet, there is the Islamic community and this Islamic community provides the power base for the Islamic state. Now, there are certain violations that are considered violations of the integrity of the Islamic community and hence of the Islamic state and such violations are punished for this reason, even though the Qur'ān and the sunnah of the Prophet may not support them. A glaring example is the classical Islamic law on apostasy, which says that an apostate should be given three chances to reconsider and repent but if he or she does not repent then finally capital punishment has to be administered. However, Qur'ān says:

> Those who believed (in Islam), then became disbelievers, then again believed and then again disbelieved and then entrenched themselves in their disbelief, God shall not pardon them ... (4:35; cf 3:90)

This verse was revealed in Madinah where the Prophet (peace be upon him!) had the power to punish people. If apostasy had been considered a punishable crime in this world, the Qur'ān would certainly have provided some punishment. But the Qur'ān only says that upon such people, i.e., those who repeatedly apostacized, there shall be God's curse. This shows that the medieval law of apostasy of Islam is out of agreement with the Qur'ān. Where does it come from? The jurists, in order to formulate this law, adduced the episode of what is called *Fitnat al-Riddah.* This episode occurred after the death of the Prophet when several Arab tribes, in order to re-assert their own tribal sovereignty, refused to pay zakāt to the administration in Madinah. These people were not abjuring Islam, they were not apostates. They insisted that they would observe the obligations of Islam: praying, fasting, making pilgrimage to the Ka'ba, etc., but they refused to pay the zakāt – tax to the Madinah government. This was tantamount to rebellion against the central authority. In fact, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab advised Abū Bakr, the then Caliph, that he should leave these people alone because they were not apostates. Abū Bakr insisted, however, that he would war against all such people,

> So long as they withold of zakāt as much as a camel's tether (rope).

The jurists, therefore, were deducing their legislation on this subject from a wrong analogy. However, we must consider the fact that the Qur'ān had created a community to carry on the task assigned to it by God who had made this community self-governing through Shūrā and had thus made it the repository of the power for Islam upon which was based the Islamic state. It became necessary to ensure the solidarity of this community and the state based upon it. This really explains this law on apostasy; even though the law contravenes the intent of the Qur'ān, nevertheless, considerations of the solidarity of the community and the integrity of the state appear to have necessitated it. In our own day, one can understand this by the example of the Russian state which is communist. If a small insignificant communist abjures communism, perhaps he would be left alone. If, on the other hand, he defects to the West, this would be considered a serious problem by the Russian government because of the potential propaganda value that the West would gain against Russia. Further, if the apostate is an important Communist like Beria, this sends shock waves through the Kremlin and such rebels may either be executed or sent in exile to Siberia or may be sent to a mental institution. It was on the basis of such considerations that this law was formulated by the jurists. As I have pointed out, however, the law is out of tune with the teaching of the Qur'ān. Also, the Qur'ān says in no unclear terms: "There is no compulsion in matters of faith." (2:256).

There are other examples of laws which derive not from the teaching of the Qur'ān or the Sunnah but from the logic of the Islamic in imperium. One such law is that when a Muslim is being tried in court on a felony charge, the evidence of a non-Muslim cannot be accepted against him. This law was changed only in the 1860s in the Ottoman Empire by the efforts of Jaudat Pasha, who pursuaded the Ottoman ulema that the classical law on this point should be reversed. The reversal of this law, of course, was due to the fact that the Western powers were pressuring Turkey to give them the right to look after the interests of Christian and Jewish minorities living within the Ottoman Empire. There are many other examples of such laws, but we will make suffice with these two.

This does not mean, however, that Muslim rulers were able to have free rein in dealing with the minorities as they liked. The Ottoman sultan, Salim I, for example, once thought of forcibly converting to Islam Jews and Christians living within his realm. It may be that his motivation was not religious but political and he wanted to make his realm a more homogeneous community than one made of several communities, which eventually led to great troubles for the Ottoman rulers. But the Sultan's Shaikh al-Islam prevented him from doing this on Islamic grounds. It was probably like the campaigns of Charlemagne, who converted German Anglo-Saxon tribes by force to Christianity and when they apostasized, Charlemagne made repeated military campaigns against them, until they became finally Christians. We have a similar example from India, where the 14th century ruler, 'Ala' ad-Dīn Khiljī wanted to lay heavy taxes upon the prosperous Hindus because he thought that whenever Hindus became rich, they became rebellious. His shaikh al-Islam however, dissuaded him from this saying that those Hindus were paying the jizyia tax and that it was improper for the ruler to exceed that limit and take the Hindus' property in a way that contravend the laws of the Shari'ah. Upon this, 'Alā' ad-Dīn Khilji

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

desisted from excessive taxation but complained, "Whenever I want to establish my rule on secure foundations, I am told that this is against the rules of the Shari'ah."

Historical Performance of Muslims

Quite apart from this, it is a fact that the Islamic Civilization was the first in the world which brought about a highly fruitful cooperation among peoples of different faiths, cultures, and races in the fields of science and philosophy, medicine and literature. As a result, a brilliant intellectual culture was produced wherein Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and others participated on an equal footing. This was particularly the case in Spain and Baghdad, but elsewhere as well. In fact, Islamic Civilization was the first such civilization in the world. Moses Maimonides, the great Jewish savant and medical man was persecuted in Spain by the Al-Muwaḥhidūn government, who wanted him to become Muslim; he, therefore, emigrated to Cairo and became court physician to Ṣalāhuddin Ayyūbi, the Muslim counterpart of the Crusader, Richard the Lion-Heart. It is even reported that Richard the Lion-Heart invited Moses Maimonides to accompany him to England, but the Jewish scholar and philosopher politely declined the offer; this is because in the Cairo of those days Moses Maimonides could find everything to satisfy his intellectual pursuit, unlike the England of those days. There were numerous other cases like Maimonides and they bring home to us, the broad humanitarian liberalism of the Islamic Civilization.

After the Islamic Civilization, it is only the modern Western Civilization that has achieved this kind of wide participation by different peoples, races, and nations in various fields of intellectual endeavor. The difference, however, is that while the modern West has been able to achieve this on a secular basis, the Muslims did it as Muslims.

I perfectly agree with Dr. Michel that the practice on the part of both individuals and the communities often falls short of their stated ideals. It is, therefore, imperatively necessary for all communities today, including Muslims, of course, that they look seriously at their ideals. It may be, as I have stated earlier on, that even some of their ideals are liable to objection from a universal ethical standpoint. I must repeat that ideals that are in clear violation of universal ethical precepts, cannot be correct and must be regarded as corruptions of the Divinely-revealed ideals for man. For the Muslims, I have been struggling for many years to advocate, not only that they look at their history but that they closely look at their history *in the light of the Qur'ān.* It is the Qur'ān that is the basis of Islam because it is the Qur'ān that is the Word of God for Muslims. It was delivered to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him!) by the Trusted Spirit. But as we have seen through a few examples given above, the Islam of the Qur'ān was compromised with actual realities on several crucial issues.

The Qur'ān, for example, had advocated rule by shūrā. Shūrā was an institution existing in pre-Islamic Arabia, whereby the chief of a tribe did not decide crucial questions by himself but through a collective decision by the elders of a tribe who represented different clans of that tribe. However, during the course of history, Muslims decided to substitute the institution of the Caliphate for shūrā. The fact, however, is that in today's world a government that is not

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

based upon the participation of the people will be basically weak. What makes democracy strong is the fact that it is supported by the will of the people. Of course, in order for an Islamic democracy to function properly, the average Muslim has to be made aware of the basic purposes of the Qur'ān and to strive after them. If the average Muslim can be made so aware, then the real shūrā of the Qur'ān can come into play. What Muslims find wrong with Western democracies is not the democratic processes that are at work in these countries but the fact that the average Westerner is disoriented in ethical terms and has no higher vision of life beyond consideration of how to earn a dollar. But the democracy of Islam was expected to be based upon the *mutual discussion (shūrā bainahum)* of the members of a community who had proper awareness of Islamic purposes. But in Islamic history, this shūrā was distorted to mean that the head of the state would consult with certain people who *he* thinks are endowed with certain wisdom and whose advice he may or may not finally take. This is an extremely important example where I find the Muslim community deviating from the norms of the Qur'ān and therefore, I passionately contend that Muslims in order to make the Muslim community a real community as envisioned by the Qur'ān must have a close look at the Qur'ān and learn from it the purposes it stands for and then give this knowledge to the average member of the Muslim community so that the whole community possesses an adequate insight into the teaching of the Qur'ān.

The current political situation in the Muslim world is a direct reversal of whatever ground was gained in the political fields during the past 100 years or so. The Muslim modernist thinkers of the past 100 years had systematically insisted that whereas the Qur'ān had given Muslims clear guidelines in all the fields of human endeavor, including the political, the Muslims, themselves, had distorted the teaching of the Qur'ān and abandoned it in favor of the cultural temper that had come to settle on Islam through the interpenetration of various cultural traditions. In the political field, they contended that the Qur'ān had clearly given the principle of shūrā to the Muslim community but the Muslims let themselves adrift in the hands of historical forces rather than controlling and directing those forces. Instead of developing a community Islamic consciousness, they allowed themselves to be ruled by autocrats. Indeed, in the light of this account, it may be questioned in what sense the caliphal institution was truly a Qura'ñic institution. The Qur'ān speaks of no caliphate: wherever the term khalifa occurs in singular or plural, it seems to have no political connotation. The Qur'ān, indeed, calls all humanity as the khalifas or viceregents of God on earth. The Muslim modernists, therefore, advocated and wherever possible agitated for constitutional forms of representative government and in many countries, they succeeded. But there was a severe reaction against this modernism on the part of the neo-fundamentalists, who in several countries are currently very powerful. Although there is little doubt that this neo-fundamentalism is a transition to something else, what this something else will be we do not know yet, but it is clear that if the Muslim community and Muslim societies are to survive as Muslim community and Muslim societies, they must be re-educated afresh into the Islamic imperatives in the political field. This reversal of Islamic modernism has occurred not only the political field, but in social fields

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

as well. For example, the modernists contended that the Qur'ān had given rights to women and had recognized the woman's individual personality in religious, economic, and social terms. There is abundant evidence in the Qur'ān for this. However, the current upsurge of neo-fundamentalism is trying its very best to submerge whatever the Muslim modernists had gained by way of social reform and rights of women. While it is correct that Muslims cannot regard the Western social and particularly sex ethics as normative and adopt it blindly, nevertheless, a blind reaction against it and a retrogression towards medievalism is equally both unwise and anti-Qur'ānic.

People of the Book

Turning now to the seven points that Thomas Michel has raised for discussion by Muslims, the first issue is that of the status of the People of the Book, called dhimmie. The word dhimmis does not occur in the Qur'ān or the hadith but it grew out of the early political military practice of Muslims. The term *jizya* does occur in the Qur'ān (2:256) where it says that Christians or People of the Book should pay jizya or tribute. The Muslims jurists in the early centuries of Islam conceived of *jizya* as a tax imposed upon the People of the Book in lieu of military service because these communities could not be expected to join Muslims in jihad. The case is recorded by historians where some tribes in Syria during the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb declined to pay *jizya,* which they contended meant humiliation for them. Umar ibn al-Khattab then asked them to pay zakāt instead of *jizya.* It should be mentioned in this connection that whereas non-Muslims had to pay *jizya,* Muslims had to pay zakāt, which was not levied on the People of the Book. *Jizya,* per se does not have any insinuations or consequences of a person being a second rate citizen. In any case, nowadays, most Muslim thinkers, including Abu'l A'lā Maudūdi, are on record that in the modern state all citizens should be regarded as equal citizens as well as before the law and that, therefore, all should be subject to the same order of taxation. The non-Muslims, therefore, do not have any reason to prefer a secular state in a Muslim society to an Islamic state. This is, again, an example of where the classical law has to be modified in the light of the Qur'ān.

I have said before in my general remarks that the Qur'ān regards all earlier revelations as true revelations even if not containing the whole truth. The Qur'ān also regards as inviolate the churches, synagogues and other places of worship where *God's name* is mentioned. On this account, there is no reason why Christians should not be able to raise their religious buildings. This is, again, one of those instances of classical law where the restriction on the building of churches and synagogues, etc. was imposed in the perceived interests of the solidarity of the Muslim community and the integrity of the state. But that situation, where the Islamic state (via the Muslim community) was perceived to be threatened by the raising of such buildings has now changed.

The Application of Shari'ah

The second point raised by Dr. Michel concerns the Shari'ah laws which, when they are applied to a society, may affect the life and practices of non-Muslims.

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

As I have detailed before, certain classical Shari'ah laws do need to be reformulated in order to bring them into conformity with the ethics of the Qur'ān, which, in fact, is not only congruent with the genuine modern values but even transcends them. In this connection the most basic principle to be observed is the concept of *Ma'rūf* which the Qur'ān repeats all the time when it talks about inter-human relations. Ma'rūf means that which sound human nature regards to be good; it is the opposite of *Munkar* which means those actions which sound human nature rejects as evil. In fact the reason why the Qur'ān has given so few laws is because of these two concepts which are basic to the Qur'ānic ethical teaching and which the Qur'ān intends to be the source of actual legislation. Non-Muslims, for example, will have the complete freedom to practice their religion and their religious rites and duties without fear of interference. There may be other things which are not connected directly with religion but which belong to Western Civilization where Christianity has taken its primary roots. The Western female dress, for example, may give offense to Muslim ethics and the wearing of such dress in public may be the subject of restrictions by a Muslim state. As for the consumption of alcohol and the products from the pig, they may be freely consumed by Christians for whom they are permitted by their religion but they have to be consumed in such a way by them that they do not interfere with the religious attitudes and practices of the Muslim majority. This is obvious and this conforms with the concept of Ma'ruf.

Hiatus between Principles and Performance

The third point raised by Dr. Michel is that although Islam does teach justice and fair play towards all human beings, it nevertheless is not always observed by Muslims. This is of course, patently true. The followers of a religion do not always conform, in their behaviour, to the standards set by that religion. I have emphasized in the preceding pages that the foremost duty and need of the Muslims today is go back to the Qur'ān and try as much as possible to live by its standards. The rights granted to the non-Muslim minorities in Muslim societies are to be safeguarded by the Islamic judicial system. Any violation suffered by minorities in Muslim societies could be taken to court. In the medieval centuries such cases were in fact on the whole heard fairly by the judges. In modern times there is an elaborate court system and there is also provision for appealing the decisions of the lower courts to a high court or the Supreme Court. The machinery thus is there. The question is whether true justice will be done by the judicial system or not.

Discrimination

And this brings me to the next point raised by Michel, namely of discrimination. Now discrimination exists everywhere based on all sorts of factors, ethnic, linguistic, religious and color. In the Western societies there has patently been ruthless discrimination against Jews and in the U.S. against Blacks and other minorities as well. While this is understandable, it is never pardonable. Islam has the merit that it did teach Muslims to transcend all such limitations and to be fair (49:13). In fact it asked Muslims to be fair even towards those people who have been their enemies (5:8).

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

Freedom of Worship

There is, however, no overnight practical solution to such impediments that a minority faces. In the case of Muslims the only remedy is that they go back to the Qur'ān and re-espouse its universalist teaching. In his point No. 5 Dr. Michel raises the question of freedom of worship. The Qur'ān patently guarantees this and it even asks the Muslims not to abuse the idol, the idol-worshippers used to worship, let alone the rites of worship of Jews and Christians. I think I have said enough in the preceding pages concerning the teaching of the Qur'ān on this point; it not only wants to tolerate but indeed protect and defend the places of worship of Judaism, Christianity etc. The Qur'ān recognizes that Christians have priests and monks, and, in fact, it praises many monks and priests for their humility and for their lack of pride as opposed to, for example, the conceit of the Jews (5:82). I do not see how Muslims could prevent small Christian minorities living among them from importing priests from the outside who would preside over and conduct their religious services. In today's world, however, there has cropped up the problem of whether a certain person who has been imported from abroad will misuse his office for activities that may not be sanctioned by a Muslim government or any government indeed. I have in mind the fears among many Muslims and others that many priests and missionaries who have come to the Third World from the West have spied for Western governments.

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

Proselytization

The sixth point raised by Dr. Michel is the all important question of the propagation of one's faith, his right to do so and the necessary freedom that must be provided for the exercise of that right. Islam is patently a religion that wants to offer itself to the world, as indeed are Christianity and Buddhism. The all-important question is: what means are used to propagate a certain religion? It is well known that until very very recently Muslims never had organized missions. Islam spread in the world through various informal channels, a subject which has been treated well by T.W. Arnold in his book *Preaching of Islam.* The only religion that has had organized missionary work on a large scale is Christianity which has vastly expanded its missionary activity in modern times during the hegemony of the Western colonial powers in the Third World. The odium that has come to be attached to missionary work is because of this factor. The Third World peoples have felt and often felt strongly that Christian missions have been using the protective hand of the colonial powers in order to spread Christianity. At least, Christian missionaries have been taking advantage of the political and economic power of the Christian governments exercising hegemony in non-Western countries. I have insisted in several of my earlier writings that Islam did not spread by the sword as has been often sloganized in the West, a slogan which still seems to have settled in the unconscious of the Western societies, particularly Western publicists and media propagandists. Islam did have a political and economic hegemony but it did not have any missionary activity in any formal sense. Those people who spread Islam were mainly Sufis who attracted non-Muslim masses towards Islam by their spiritual

activity and their broad humanitarian services to all sorts of people whether Muslim or non-Muslim. It remains however true that because the Muslims had power many people were attracted towards Islam in order to be able to participate in that power structure. Whether this phenomenon can be characterized as ethically fair is a question which I do not think is open to discussion because there was never an active utilization of political power on the part of Muslims to attract non-Muslims. This does not mean to say that here and there, there may not have been any cases of questionable methods of conversion, but this does not invalidate my position as a whole. In fact Christians are still being widely rumored to misuse the influential position of Western states to convert non-Christians to Christianity. On a recent visit to Indonesia I was told by many people that Christians in Indonesia were utilizing imported financial power (which is against the Indonesian law) to induce poor Muslims particularly in central Java, to embrace Christianity. In fact I was told that the number of Christians has increased by a certain percentage because of this activity. The Indonesian government is known to be extremely liberal on this point and it has gone out of the way to guarantee freedom for all religious groups. It seems however that certain Christian organizations there exercise undue monetary influence on certain poor Muslims who are commonly called "Rice Christians" i.e. they are provided means of sustenance and sometimes education for their children by Christians in order to attract them to Christianity. This is a case of tyranny of a minority exercised over a majority. In my early remarks in this statement I had fully agreed with Dr. Michel that there is a limit to which both a majority and a minority can go in order to exercise their rights without interfering in the natural rights and privileges of each other.

The propagation of Islam is called *Tablīgh*. It is a word used in the Qur'ān (5:67). Tablīgh means to make available to non-Muslims the message of Islam. This can be done with the utmost of fairness without giving offense to any party.

The keynote of the Qur'ānic teaching is to bear in mind *(taqwā)* the *ghaib*. *Ghaib* is *al-ākhira*. *Al-Ākhira* means that which is beyond, that which is not here and now, but to which the here and now must lead. When the Qur'ān frequently calls man to "send something for the morrow" this is what it means. Opposed to *al-ākhira* is *al-dunyā* in the terminology of the Qur'ān. Now, these two terms, *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhira* have two meanings which are closely allied: one involves the time factor, that is *al-dunyā* which literally means that which is near, the here and now, while *al-ākhira* means the distant future when the results of the endeavor of the here and now will appear. The second meaning which, as I have indicated, is closely allied to this first meaning is that *al-dunyā* stands for the lower values, the baser instincts, whereas *al-ākhira* stands for the higher values. When the Qur'ān says, criticizing the Meccan commercial community, "they know the externalities of this life (here and now) well, but are unheedful of the end." (30:7), it means both these things together, namely that which in terms of time here and now and which is lower on the one hand and on the other that which is yet to come and which is of higher value.

In order to keep this notion of transcendence alive in man, the Qur'ān emphasizes the notion of *taqwā,* which means to guard against moral peril, to save one's self from the danger of disintegration. The whole idea of *al-ākhira* in the Qur'ān is based on this notion. If one were to keep one's eyes steadfast

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015

on the transcendent and generate in one's self the necessary sense of responsibility, one will have the necessary *taqwā* and in fact the Day of Judgment will not even be necessary because what will transpire on the Day of Judgment is to evaluate the present deeds of man and if man performs his present deeds with an eye to the future, to the *ākhira*, to the transcendent, then for him there will be no need of a Judgment Day because every moment for him will be the hour of judgment. The basic elan of the Qur'ān, therefore, is to inculcate in man this deepest sense of responsibility. This responsibility is felt toward our fellowmen, and towards the coming generations and towards the environment in which we live. In other words, this is a responsibility expressed in terms of transcendence. Although religions inculcate a concrete-enough concept of this future life towards which man builds responsibility and Islam introduced the notion of the "weighing of deeds" of men for this purpose and insisted that deeds that are done only as motivated by the impulses of here and now, have "no weight"; only those deeds have weight which are done with the *ākhira* in view, nevertheless in the course of time when the original religious impulse becomes a tradition, the perspective changes. In the Islamic tradition, the concept of *ākhira* came to be conceived as of something separate from and discrete from this life. Therefore a type of piety came to be inculcated (instead of the practical living *taqwā* of the Qur'ān), which meant keeping one's gaze upon "the next world" while the next world was conceived as something discontinuous with this world.

The Muslims, therefore, particularly in the later medieval centuries, largely cultivated a piety which had little to do with the problems of this world. What happened in the West, on the other hand, was the opposite of this. There, ever since the Enlightenment, the Western man, reacting against the other-wordly piety inculcated by the Church as being discontinuous with the present life, cultivated science and technology or what is called positive knowledge. Under this strong impulse, the West concentrated wholeheartedly and wholemindedly on the present, on the here and now; it developed its science and technology to the point where man became slave of the machine, and science and technology, rather than serve the purposes of man, (the long-range objectives which is the *ākhira*), became instead immersed in the present. This materialism cultivated one-sidedly has now started showing its effects in terms of some men with sharp minds and keen conscience trying to find a solution which would help reconstruct the present world in the light of the higher purposes of man's existence, while a large number of the masses in a vacuum of values have begun to turn riotous either seeking carnal pleasures with an insatiable thirst or turning to gravely deviant human behaviour like the taking of drugs, taking of human lives, taking of one's own life. In other words, the world has become a jungle where man has become an animal. The problems for man, therefore, is how to harness scientific and technological progress for the cultivation of a higher vision of life, of an *ākhira* in terms of the long-range values of man.

Downloaded by [New York University] at 12:05 21 February 2015